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ABSTRACT

Results of writing tests given to a large sample of 9, 13, and 17-year olds throughout Texas are reported in detail. Results are reported in terms of the percent of students writing at stated levels of competency or exhibiting particular writing skills. The results are reported for eight categories: (1) statewide; (2) 20 state geographic regions; (3) family income; (4) ethnic background (black, Mexican American, and other); (5) size and type of school district; (6) per pupil expenditure; (7) sex of students; and (8) languages spoken in the home. Major findings are summarized. Appendices include tables which complement the findings. (MH)

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WRITING

A STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT IN TEXAS

ED169132

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TEXAS ASSESSMENT PROJECT
Texas Education Agency, Austin, 1978

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972; AND THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and/or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

FOREWORD

The State Board of Education has a long-standing interest in finding out how well Texas students are achieving the basic competencies necessary to function as adults in our society. The Sixty-fifth Texas Legislature expressed its interest in better information for educational planning and improvement, and provided resources to be used for this purpose. To carry out this directive, the Texas Education Agency has conducted a statewide assessment of student achievement in four basic student goal areas.

We are both gratified and grateful for the positive response we received from local school officials in carrying out this assessment. Every one of more than 2,200 school campuses requested to participate in the study agreed to do so, and their cheerful cooperation throughout the effort was of inestimable value to the success of the project. We take this as a sign that the local school districts of Texas share a keen professional interest in being accountable, both in terms of recognizing their successes and of taking appropriate actions to strengthen their programs where weaknesses are identified.

The findings in these reports provide important information about where Texas students are achieving well and where they are experiencing learning problems. But assessment is only the first step toward improvement. The rest of the task consists of finding the problems within and outside the school that underlie low student achievement, adapting or inventing more effective instructional practices to overcome these problems, marshalling the support and commitment of parents and communities in understanding and joining with educators in solving these problems, providing the resources necessary to bring about planned change, and putting these improved instructional practices into effect.

We at the Texas Education Agency call upon local school districts, teacher education institutions, regional education service centers, professional organizations, the Texas Legislature, and the citizens of Texas to join us in using this information to bring about improvements in learning opportunities for Texas students. It is only through concerted efforts of the entire educational community that we can continue to move toward excellence and provide the finest possible educational programs for the children and youth of Texas.

M. L. Brockette

M. L. Brockette
Commissioner of Education

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OVERVIEW

The Texas Assessment Project (TAP) was developed by the Texas Education Agency in cooperation with educators representing a variety of school districts and professional organizations. Designed to measure student achievement in reading, mathematics, writing (composition), and citizenship, the assessment was conducted in response to legal and policy directives from the Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education. These directives are contained in the Texas Education Code, Goals for Public School Education in Texas, Priorities of the State Board of Education, Senate Concurrent Resolutions 29 and 30, and Senate Bill 1 of the Sixty-fifth Texas Legislature.

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

Three kinds of measures used in the study provide information from different perspectives:

- Norm-referenced Tests (NRT) of reading and mathematics, to compare performance of Texas students with students in a national norm group
- Criterion-referenced Tests (CRT) of reading and mathematics, developed in Texas to determine degree of mastery of essential objectives already established for students in Texas schools
- Test exercises (items) for citizenship and writing, developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), to determine achievement of Texas students on specific items, and to compare their performance with national and regional results of previous NAEP assessments

Reading and mathematics tests were administered to students in grades 6 and 11; writing and citizenship exercises were administered to 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds.

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

Goal Areas	Measurement Instruments		
	NRT	CRT	NAEP
Reading	6th Grade	6th & 11th Grades	
Mathematics	6th Grade	6th & 11th Grades	
Writing			9-Year-Olds 13-Year-Olds 17-Year-Olds
Citizenship			9-Year-Olds 13-Year-Olds 17-Year-Olds

SAMPLE OF STUDENTS

The sampling pattern for the study was planned to represent student performance statewide and within each of the 20 regions served by an education service center. The sample was not designed to be representative of any school district, campus, or classroom.

The sampling plan was developed under a contract with Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina and is patterned after a similar sampling design used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress project. It was designed to provide a balance of ages and grades, a proportionate representation of ethnic groups, and a cross-section of different types of school districts. The sample of students tested in each region represents the total school population within that region.

A random sample of 113,307 students was selected to represent the total student population of 854,020 in the age and grade categories selected for testing.[1]

TEST ADMINISTRATION

Tests were given to students by specially trained test administrators both to reduce the burden on school personnel and to ensure uniform administration of the tests throughout the state. A contract to conduct the testing was awarded by the State Board of Education to Research Triangle Institute. In April and May of 1978, over 5,000 testing sessions were conducted in 2,234 elementary and secondary schools.

REPORTS

Findings of the Texas Assessment Project are published in a series of six reports:

- *Reading – Texas Assessment of Essential Objectives*
- *Mathematics – Texas Assessment of Essential Objectives*
- *Achievement in Reading and Mathematics – 6th Grade*
- *Writing – A Statewide Assessment in Texas*
- *Citizenship – A Statewide Assessment in Texas*
- *Summary Report – Texas Assessment Project*

Copies of the reports or additional information may be obtained from:

Texas Education Agency
Division of Educational Assessment
201 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
Telephone: (512) 475-2066

[1] For a complete description of the sample design, see the publication, *Sample Design for the Texas Assessment Project, Final Technical Report*, available from the Texas Education Agency.

BACKGROUND

Writing is important. Texans have traditionally recognized that the ability to express ideas in writing is essential to effective membership in society. Lawmakers and educators alike have stressed this basic communication skill as one of the prerequisites to full citizenship, the legal and moral objective sought by the Texas public school system:

> All public free schools in this state shall be required to offer instruction in the following subjects: English grammar, reading in English, orthography, penmanship, composition . . . .[2]

The Goals for Public School Education in Texas adopted in 1970 by the State Board of Education declare that a primary purpose of public schools is to help students achieve "knowledge of the traditionally accepted fundamentals, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. . . ."

The Texas Assessment Project (TAP) assessed the performance of students at ages 9, 13, and 17 in one of those fundamental areas, writing. Test exercises measured:

- performance on specific writing tasks
- mechanics of written expression
- recognizing appropriate writing and valuing written communication

This report outlines the writing performance of Texas students and compares it to the performance of students nationally. Data on performance of students in the United States were collected by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

TEST DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Test items for the Texas writing assessment were selected from those developed by National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project funded by the U.S. Office of Education. These test items were developed and adapted from objectives developed by NAEP. The NAEP objectives are included in Appendix A, page 46. The purpose of the national assessment was to gather information for the educational community and the general public about some of the direct outcomes of education as exhibited by students and young adults. NAEP assessed the writing achievement of 13-year-olds in 1973 and 9- and 17-year-olds in 1974.

A review panel from the Texas Education Agency selected test exercises for the Texas assessment to include actual writing exercises as well as responses to items about writing.

---

[2] *Texas Education Code*, Section 21.101.

In the Texas assessment, writing exercises were administered with citizenship exercises in seven test packages. One letter or essay and several short-answer items appropriate to the age level comprised the writing portion of each test. Each test package was given to a separate sample of students within the following time limits: 40 minutes for age 9; 80 minutes for age 13; and 85 minutes for age 17.

In order to compare Texas results with national results, exercises were administered under conditions consistent with those used by NAEP. Research Triangle Institute personnel selected and trained test administrators from persons recommended as qualified and acceptable by Texas educators. Training sessions and test administration were monitored by Texas Education Agency staff.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

When reviewing results, several factors should be kept in mind:

- The items used in assessing writing achievement serve as a sample of some aspects of student writing. Not all the items were administered to each student at each age level. The items are very specific. No attempt is made to cover all types of writing or to produce a "writing" score.

- The sampling procedures which were used permit reporting with a high degree of confidence that the findings represent performance of Texas students at three age levels.

- No information is available from this study about the performance of any school district, school campus, educational program, teacher, or individual students. Therefore, no attempt should be made to use these findings to make judgments about the performance of any single local school district, campus, teacher, or student.

- The findings reported here are results from measurements taken in April and May of 1978. To measure changes in the performance of students, data must be gathered over a period of time.

- Conventional methods were used to determine statistical significance of differences between group scores. Differences which are significant are used as the basis for reporting findings about results on individual questions. The methodology for determining statistical significance, including sample sizes, is contained in the technical documentation for the Texas Assessment Project.

Since the performance of Texas students is compared with the performance of other students in the nation, a comparison of the state with the nation on ethnic and economic make-up may contribute to a better understanding of the Texas results. Table I compares Texas to the nation by three ethnic populations. The percentages shown in Table I are for student populations in grades K-12.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION: ETHNIC STUDENT POPULATION

	TEXAS	UNITED STATES
MINORITY STUDENT POPULATION		
Black	15.3%	14.5%
Mexican American	25.3%	5.6%
Other	59.4%	79.9%
(Texas Education Annual Fall Survey, 1977, and U.S. Bureau of Census Statistical Abstract, 1977)		

Table II shows the comparative percentages of persons below the poverty level in Texas and in the United States.[3]

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION: POVERTY LEVEL

	TEXAS	UNITED STATES
PERSONS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL	15.2%	11.4%
(U.S. Bureau of Census Statistical Abstract, 1977)		

Tables I and II show that:

- Texas has approximately the same proportion of black students, and more than four and one-half times the proportion of Mexican American students, as the nation.

[3]The poverty percentages are based on 1975 data which defined the poverty level as $5,500 for a non-farm family of four.

- Texas has twice the proportion of minority students as the nation.
- Texas has a higher proportion of persons below the poverty level than the nation.

The two largest minority groups, black and Mexican American, constitute 40.6 percent of the Texas student population; these ethnic groups represent 20.1 percent of the national student population.

The relationship among academic performance, ethnicity, and economic status of students has been well documented in educational research. Results of past Texas assessments have shown that black and Mexican American students generally perform below other students on standardized achievement tests.[4] Since Texas has a larger proportion of minority students and more persons below the poverty level than the nation, performance of Texas students, as a group, might predictably be lower than performance of students nationally.

[4] For further discussion, see *1971 Texas Achievement Appraisal Study, Sixth Grade Mathematics*, and *Sixth Grade Reading*, Texas Education Agency publications.

PERFORMANCE ON SPECIFIC WRITING TASKS

This report presents the results of the writing portion of the Texas Assessment Project conducted in April and May of 1978. Where appropriate, Texas results are compared with national figures for 1973 and 1974, the latest data available; and the performance of several groups within the state are discussed. The first section reports students' ability to respond to specific writing tasks. The second section describes students' use of writing mechanics. The third section provides information on students' ability to recognize appropriate writing and to value writing as a means of communication.

Few would argue that the best way to tell how well students write is to examine their writing. At the same time, collecting and judging writing exercises is time-consuming and much more expensive than the machine scoring applied to multiple choice tests.

The Texas Assessment Project gathered responses of students in three age groups to two kinds of writing assignments: (1) explanatory or persuasive letters, and (2) a descriptive essay. In addition, 9-year-olds were given an exercise in expressive writing. The explanatory and persuasive letters and the expressive writing were scored according to a methodology developed by NAEP, based on the assumption that inherent in each writing task are certain objectives to be accomplished, and that some writing strategies will achieve these objectives, while others will not. Thus, successful papers written in response to a specific exercise exhibit certain characteristics, while unsuccessful papers exhibit these characteristics to a limited degree.

Student writing reported here represents first-draft attempts of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students to respond to writing tasks presented in testing situations.

Students were held to specified time limits and were allowed no extra time for revising or editing.

PERFORMANCE OF 9-YEAR-OLDS

Two writing tasks undertaken by 9-year-olds are reported in this section: an expressive essay and an explanatory letter.

Statewide Results

The expressive writing was a response to the following task:

> Sometimes people write just for the fun of it. This is a chance for you to have some fun writing.
>
> Pretend that you are a pair of tennis shoes. You've done all kinds of things with your owner in all kinds of weather. Now you are being picked up again by your owner. Tell how you feel about your owner. Space is provided below and on the next two pages.

This exercise, the "tennis shoe" item, tested students' ability to reveal feelings and ideas through free expression. Although expressive, the task was structured because it required expression of attitudes or feelings through inventive elaboration of a role. Directions were explicit about what was expected, and time was limited to 15 minutes. Writing was scored according to four levels of quality:

- Level I papers show no evidence of using writing to express attitudes or feelings through inventive elaboration of a role.

- Level II papers show some evidence of the appropriate trait. They establish an identifiable role and elaborate it slightly through recounting experiences with the owner. Writers in this category respond to the task only superficially.

- Level III papers display the desired trait. They demonstrate ability to use writing as a means of expressing attitude or feeling through inventive elaboration. Writers in this category are judged to have performed the writing task successfully.

- Level IV responses demonstrate all the qualities of a Level III paper, but in addition display consistent and vivid elaboration of role, sustained character development, careful selection of details, and an absence of irrelevances.

Table III provides percentages of Texas students whose papers were scored in one of the four levels of quality and compares their performance with students nationally. Forty-nine percent of Texas students wrote Level III papers, the established standard for this exercise, whereas 55 percent of students in the national sample wrote Level III papers. Less than one percent of Texas students, however, wrote papers judged as Level IV, the highest level of attainment. Twenty percent of Texas students wrote Level II papers and 21 percent wrote Level I papers, compared to 18 percent and 15 percent respectively for their peers nationally. Seven percent of students in Texas responded with illegible papers, misunderstood the task, or wrote "I don't know."

TABLE III

EXPRESSIVE WRITING – AGE 9
PRETEND TO BE A PAIR OF TENNIS SHOES
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Levels of Quality	Percentages	
	Texas	U.S.
Level I: No Role Established	22	15
Level II: Little or No Elaboration of Role	20	18
Level III: Good Elaboration of Role	49	55
Level IV: Inventive, Creative Elaboration of Role	†	1
Illegible, Misunderstood, or Wrote "I Don't Know"	7	10

†Less than ½ percent.

The second writing exercise for 9-year-olds, an explanatory letter, required a response to the following item:

Buffalo-Bill-Kite Request Letter--Here is an advertisement from a magazine. Pretend that you are interested in the kite that is being advertised. You want to get one right away. All you have to do is send for it!

Write a short letter to the proper place and order a kite.

While 9-year-olds are not expected to be highly proficient in writing of this sort, there are certain essentials that they are expected to understand and demonstrate. To be "successful," students had to incorporate the following elements in their letters:

- a request for the kite
- the destination of the request
- a complete return address (name, box or street address, city and state)

Although few of the Texas 9-year-olds could integrate all the tasks necessary to write a letter and obtain a kite, the percentages of students able to complete parts of the task

varied considerably. Ten percent of Texas 9-year-olds wrote a successful kite request, a figure below the national percentage of 14. Three-fourths of Texas students, however, did request a kite, a proportion which paralleled that of students nationally (Table IV). Performance on this exercise by students in Texas and in the nation was very low, suggesting that the task was beyond the competence of 9-year-olds and was inherently difficult.

Nine-year-olds in grade 3 and grade 4 were tested. Nationally, 75 percent of students tested were in grade 4, as compared with 39 percent of Texas students who were in grade 4. When 9-year-old student performance is compared by grade level, the results show that performance of Texas fourth graders approximately equaled that of all national 9-year-olds.

TABLE IV

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A REQUEST FOR A FREE KITE
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages			
	Texas			U.S.
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grs. 3 & 4	Grs. 3 & 4
Performance on Each of Three Elements:				
1. Sends Requests to Proper Destination	37	50	42	45
2. Specifically Asks for the Kite	74	82	77	79
3. Provides Return Address –				
Name	48	62	53	54
Street Address or Box No.	51	58	54	52
City	25	32	28	36
State	24	31	27	34
Performance on All Elements Combined:				
Successful Requests for a Free Kite	8	14	10	14

Regional Results

Table V charts regional variations in ability to express feelings by establishing and elaborating roles in writing in the "tennis shoe" item and to include the essential elements of an explanatory letter requesting a free buffalo kite. The ability of Texas 9-year-olds to express feelings in writing varied in the 20 geographic regions of the state (Figure 1). The performance of students in Regions I and XVIII was below that of students statewide. The performance of students in four regions exceeded statewide performance (Regions III, X, XI, and XVI). Performance on the letter writing exercise varied among Texas regions. Performance of students in Regions V and XVI was above the performance of students in the state, while students in five regions scored below the statewide level.

TWENTY EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER REGIONS OF TEXAS

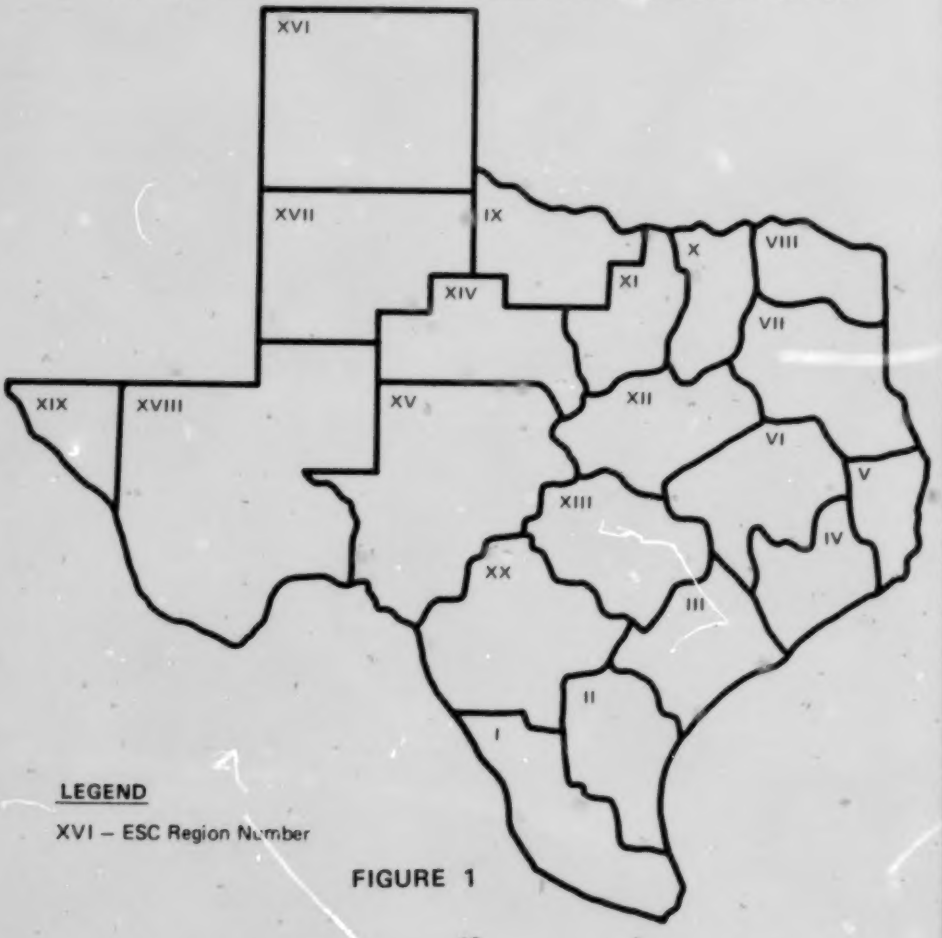

FIGURE 1

TABLE V

EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9
PERFORMANCE BY REGION

Texas Regions	Percentages	
	Successful Role Elaboration	Successful Kite Request
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
Region I	24	4
Region II	43	6
Region III	59	10
Region IV	45	14
Region V	51	13
Region VI	50	14
Region VII	50	13
Region VIII	51	8
Region IX	50	13
Region X	55	9
Region XI	56	11
Region XII	51	7
Region XIII	55	13
Region XIV	47	13
Region XV	51	11
Region XVI	60	15
Region XVII	48	11
Region XVIII	40	7
Region XIX	42	4
Region XX	48	6

Family Income Status[5]

Other studies have shown a relationship between student performance and family income level. Eligibility for participation in the National School Lunch Program, which provides free or reduced price meals for students, is a dependable indicator of low income status. Eligibility for this program, which operates in 1,063 of the 1,100 Texas school districts, is based on family size and income. Information about eligibility for free or reduced price lunch was provided by local school officials based on school records.

[5] See Appendix B, page 56 for Definitions of TAP Reporting Groups.

Smaller percentages of students from low income families than from average or higher income families were able to complete successfully both the expressive writing essay and the kite request letter (Table VI).

TABLE VI

EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9 PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

	Percentages	
	Successful Role Elaboration	Successful Kite Request
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
Low Income	30	3
Not Low Income	58	14

Ethnicity

Scores of Texas 9-year-olds on both writing exercises were analyzed by three ethnic groups: black, Mexican American, and "other" students. (The "other" category was composed almost entirely of white students.) Table VII shows almost identical performance of black and Mexican American students on the expressive writing and business letter exercises. Percentages of black and Mexican American students completing these exercises successfully were below statewide percentages, while those of "other" students were above. Black and Mexican American students as groups tended to meet with less success in ordering the kite than did "other" students. However, some students in all three ethnic groups did perform these two tasks successfully.

TABLE VII

EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9 PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

	Percentages	
	Successful Role Elaboration	Successful Kite Request
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
Black	29	4
Mexican American	31	4
Other	59	14

Size and Type of School District

Variations in performance on the "tennis shoe" item and the kite request were analyzed by school district size and type. Smaller percentages of students in urban districts and in districts of 50,000 ADA (largely overlapping categories) than students in the other types and sizes of districts adequately expressed their feelings through inventive role elaboration in writing or wrote a successful kite request. Percentages of students in other central city districts were below the state level on the kite request. The only groups performing above the statewide percentages on role elaboration were those from suburban districts and those from districts with 10,000 to 50,000 ADA (Appendix C, page 49).

Per Pupil Expenditure

School districts were also classified by amount of state and local funds expended annually per student. Since federal funds and money expended for capital outlay or for bonded indebtedness were not included, these figures do not represent the total amount most districts spend per student. Districts spending less than $700 of state and local funds per student per year had lower percentages of students performing successfully than students statewide on the kite request (Appendix C, page 49).

To reach any definitive conclusions about the relationship between per pupil expenditure and levels of student achievement, more information would be necessary, such as all sources of funds, distribution to campuses, and patterns of achievement within districts.

Males and Females

Student performance on both writing exercises was analyzed by sex. Results show that while both groups performed below the nation, Texas females scored better than males on the expressive writing exercise and on the explanatory letter (Appendix C, page 49).

Languages Spoken in the Home

Students reporting that English was the only language spoken at home responded to both writing tasks better than students statewide. Students who reported predominant use of another language at home performed least well of all three groups (Appendix C, page 50).

PERFORMANCE OF 13-YEAR-OLDS

Thirteen-year-old students responded to an exercise which involved writing a persuasive letter to a school principal. They were expected to use reasoned and systematic methods of persuasion to defend a proposition. The test item follows:

Imagine that your principal asked for suggestions about how to make things better in your school. Write a letter to your principal telling him just ONE thing you think should be changed, how to bring about the change, and how the school will be improved by it. Space is provided below and on the next three pages. Sign your letter "Chris Johnson."

333 West Street
Loden, Ohio 99999
September 5, 1978

Mark Hopkins, Principal
Martin Intermediate School
Loden, Ohio 99999

This exercise requires a systematic, persuasive approach to a problem. Three elements were necessary for successful completion of the task:

- identification of a problem which should be solved
- a proposal of a way to solve the problem or bring about the change
- arguments and evidence to demonstrate that the change will benefit the school

For this exercise, tone and format were not considered important criteria of a well-developed paper. To attain success the writer must have focused on one issue and developed an approach that was appropriate. Letters were evaluated and placed in four levels of quality:

- Level I papers do not identify a problem or defend a change.
- Level II papers identify a problem and explain either how to solve the problem or how the school would be improved if the problem were solved. Their reasoning is undeveloped.
- Level III papers identify one problem, explain how to solve it, and tell how the change would benefit the school. They successfully define and defend a change.
- Level IV papers meet the same requirements, but they also systematically define and defend a change.

Statewide Results

Half as many Texas students as students in the United States were able to write effective letters to the principal. Table VIII reports the percentage of Texas students who wrote papers judged at each of the four levels of quality.

TABLE VIII

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Levels of Accomplishment	Percentages	
	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Neither defined nor defended a change.	40	26
Level II: Identified problem, reasoning undeveloped.	41	40
Level III: Defined and defended a change.	14	27
Level IV: Systematically defined and defended a change.	3	4
Illegible, Misunderstood, or Wrote "I Don't Know"	2	2

Seventeen percent of Texas students demonstrated competence in this exercise by writing persuasive letters which were judged in Levels III and IV; however, 31 percent of students in the nation wrote papers which met the criteria of Levels III and IV. Most of the responses by Texas students (81 percent in Levels I and II) did not develop their reasoning, propose a change, or identify a problem. NAEP has indicated that this persuasive writing task demands higher level cognitive skills. The percentage of students who performed at some level of success is encouraging.

Regional Results

Student performance in the 20 geographic regions of the state varied from statewide performance in several instances. Twice as high a percentage of students in Region XI wrote papers at Level IV than did students statewide. Higher percentages of students in Regions XII, XVIII, and XIX performed at Level IV than students in the nation. A smaller percentage of students in Region I wrote papers scored at Level III than did students statewide (Table IX).

TABLE IX

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE BY REGION

Texas Regions	Percentages				
	Illegible, Misunderstood, or "I don't Know	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	2	40	41	14	3
United States	2	26	40	27	4
Region I	1	52	36	7	1
Region II	2	48	33	14	3
Region III	†	39	44	13	3
Region IV	2	43	42	11	2
Region V	1	35	48	12	4
Region VI	1	41	40	14	4
Region VII	2	46	38	11	4
Region VIII	1	39	41	16	3
Region IX	1	35	42	19	3
Region X	2	39	42	14	2
Region XI	2	35	40	17	6
Region XII	1	30	45	19	5
Region XIII	1	34	46	15	3
Region XIV	1	40	46	12	1
Region XV	1	30	49	17	3
Region XVI	1	36	43	17	2
Region XVII	1	38	44	14	3
Region XVIII	1	38	42	13	5
Region XIX	1	33	44	17	5
Region XX	2	48	35	12	3

†Less than ½ percent.

Family Income Status

Wide differences were found between the performance of students from low income families and students not from low income families. More than half of the students from low income families wrote Level I papers, the lowest level of quality for the writing task. Eight percent of students from low income families wrote papers judged at Level III, the level of quality deemed adequate; twice that proportion (16 percent) of students not from low-income families wrote papers at Level III (Table X).

TABLE X

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

	Percentages				
	Illegible, Misunderstood, or "I Don't Know"	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	2	40	41	14	c
United States	2	26	40	27	4
Low Income	3	55	33	8	1
Not Low Income	1	34	45	16	4

Ethnicity

Performance of 13-year-olds on the letter to the principal was analyzed for three ethnic groups. Half of Mexican American students and more than half of black students wrote papers at Level I. "Other" students wrote twice as high a percentage of Level III papers as black and Mexican American students, yet proportionately fewer "other" students wrote papers at this level than did students in the nation. Although students in all groups wrote papers judged at Level IV, the performance of "other" students in Texas corresponded most closely to the performance of students in the nation (Table XI).

TABLE XI

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

	Percentages				
	Illegible, Misunderstood, or "I Don't Know"	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	2	40	41	14	3
United States	2	26	40	27	4
Black	4	58	29	7	1
Mexican American	3	50	38	8	2
Other	1	32	46	17	4

Size and Type of School District

Students from urban districts wrote a greater percentage of Level I papers than did students in the state as a whole and a smaller percentage at Level III. Students in suburban, non-metropolitan, and rural districts did as well as students in the state at Level III and about as well as students in the nation at Level IV. However, no district type approached the percentages of Level III papers written by students in the nation. Results of student performance by school district size closely paralleled the performance of students by district type, with students in large districts performing similarly to students in urban districts, and students in small districts performing similarly to students in rural districts (Appendix C, page 50).

Per Pupil Expenditure

No differences in student performance among school districts grouped by per pupil expenditure were evident (Appendix C, page 50).

Males and Females

At age 13 the performance of females in writing persuasive letters exceeded the performance of males. Females wrote more papers evaluated at Level III and Level IV than did males. Sixteen percent of papers written by females were judged at Level III, and four percent of female students wrote Level IV letters. Eleven percent of male students wrote papers at Level III, and two percent at Level IV. Level II papers written by both

males and females closely paralleled the writing of males and females statewide and nationally. Thirty-six percent of Texas females wrote Level I papers while 44 percent of papers written by males were judged in this category (Appendix C, page 51).

Language Spoken in the Home

Data were collected for students in three types of home language backgrounds: (1) English only spoken in the home: (2) a language other than English spoken in the home; and (3) a language other than English spoken predominantly in the home. Higher percentages of students from homes where only English is spoken wrote papers at Levels III and IV than students statewide. Students from homes where a language other than English is spoken predominantly performed less well than students statewide (Appendix C, page 51).

PERFORMANCE OF 17-YEAR-OLDS

Writing the letter of application for a job involved a wide range of skills, from persuasive writing techniques to standard conventions of a routine business letter. Seventeen-year-old students were asked to write a job application letter in response to the following newspaper advertisement:

SUMMER ONLY

Need two high school students to work in large clothing store. $85 week, July and August. Write John Fried, Box 26078, *New York Times*, New York, New York 10017.

Chris Jones lives at 3600 Larch Street in New York, New York 10004. Chris has finished the junior year at Truman High School and has been looking for a summer job. Chris spotted this advertisement in the *New York Times* and has decided to apply for the job. Write Chris' letter of application to Mr. Fried.

Essential information necessary for an acceptable letter included three elements:

- level of education of the applicant
- description or identification of the specific job sought
- indication of how to contact the applicant

Job application letters were judged to distinguish varying degrees of competence: those including one element, two elements, or all three essential elements. Inclusion of all three elements indicated successful completion of the writing task.

Statewide Results

Comparison of the performance of 17-year-olds in Texas with that of 17-year-olds in the nation (Table XII) indicates that proportionately fewer Texas students included all three essential elements in their letters than students in the nation. The percentage of Texas students who provided all three elements was less than half of the national percentage.

TABLE XII

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18

Regional Results

Texas students in the 20 geographic regions demonstrated little variation in their performance compared to the statewide group. The percentage of students in Region XX who included all three essential elements in their letters was higher than students statewide; performance of students in Region VII was below performance statewide (Table XIII).

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE BY REGION

Texas Regions	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18
Region I	65	20	40	6
Region II	74	24	37	10
Region III	66	21	41	6
Region IV	62	15	40	6
Region V	68	22	46	6
Region VI	66	21	45	7
Region VII	60	16	32	3
Region VIII	70	25	37	7
Region IX	70	18	42	6
Region X	72	25	52	12
Region XI	64	24	45	7
Region XII	73	20	40	7
Region XIII	74	26	49	10
Region XIV	64	18	41	7
Region XV	74	20	37	7
Region XVI	68	26	51	9
Region XVII	72	20	39	7
Region XVIII	67	17	42	7
Region XIX	73	23	51	7
Region XX	71	29	50	12

Family Income Status

On the inclusion of two of the three essential elements in the job application letter, performance of 17-year-old students from low income families was below that of students statewide, and performance of students from average or higher income families was above that of students statewide (Table XIV).

TABLE XIV

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18
Low Income	62	21	37	6
Not Low Income	69	22	45	8

Ethnicity

Performance of "other" students exceeded that of students statewide. Performance of Mexican American students closely paralleled the performance of students statewide. The performance of black students was below the statewide percentages (Table XV).

TABLE XV

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18
Black	57	14	38	3
Mexican American	65	21	42	7
Other	70	23	45	9

Size and Type of School District

Differences in the performance of students including the three essential elements in their job application letters were small among the different types of school districts (Appendix C, page 52).

Per Pupil Expenditure

Seventeen-year-olds from districts where the annual per pupil expenditure was $1,000 or more performed above the state total on the job application writing task (Appendix C, page 52).

Males and Females

Generally, the performance of females was higher than the performance of males on the job application letter. More females provided all three essential elements in their job applications. Although the performance of females was above the performance of students statewide, their performance was below that of students in the nation (Appendix C, page 53).

Languages Spoken in the Home

The writing performance of students from homes where only English is spoken was above the performance of students statewide with respect to inclusion of all three essential elements. Students from homes where a language other than English is spoken predominantly performed less well than students statewide (Appendix C, page 53).

PERFORMANCE ON MECHANICS OF WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Descriptive writing for all three age groups was scored according to accepted standards of correctness in word choice, spelling, capitalization, agreement, and punctuation. In addition, these exercises were scored according to length and kinds of words, sentences, and paragraphs used.

STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE

Nine-year olds responded to the following item:

Here is a picture of a kangaroo in Australia. Look at the picture for a while. What do you think is happening? Where do you suppose the kangaroo came from? Where do you think he is going? Low how high he jumps! Why do you suppose he is jumping over the fence?

Write a story about what is happening in the picture.

Thirteen- and 17-year-olds were allowed to select a topic in response to the following:

Everybody knows of something that is worth talking about. Maybe you know about a famous building like the Empire State Building in New York City or something like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Or you might know a lot about the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City or the new sports stadium in Atlanta or St. Louis. Or you might be familiar with something from nature, like Niagara Falls, a gigantic wheat field, a grove of orange trees, or a part of a wide muddy river like the Mississippi.

There is probably something you can describe. Choose something you know about. It may be something from around where you live, or something you have seen while traveling, or something you have studied in school. Think about it for a while and then write a description of what it looks like so that it could be recognized by someone who has read your description.

Name what you are describing and try to use your best writing.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Because of the expense involved in scoring, these items were administered to samples of students drawn to represent males and females, three ethnic groups, family income status, and languages spoken in the home. The samples were not designed to represent geographic regions or types of school districts.

Paragraph Writing Skills

Table XVI presents data comparing Texas 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds with the nation on quality of paragraphs. Three levels of competence for a paragraph were established:

Level I

Paragraph in form only indicates the paragraph is essentially a visual device. The writer uses indentation, skips a line, or stops in the middle of a line and starts back at the margin; but the paragraph is neither coherent nor developed. The one-sentence paragraph generally is placed in this category. Writing scored at Level I is unsuccessful in terms of paragraphing.

Level II

Paragraph coherent indicates an interconnectedness among sentences and among the ideas of those sentences. The relationship of the idea of a sentence to the ideas that precede and follow it is clear. In other words, when reading a coherent

paragraph, the reader is never confused about the order of its parts or their relationship to each other. Level II papers demonstrate an adequate level of paragraph development but do not show full competence.

Level III

Paragraph developed indicates that the paragraph has an expressed or an implied topic sentence which identifies and limits the central area of concern in the paragraph. Each additional sentence, in an orderly manner, adds to or explains something about the main idea embodied in the topic sentence. Paragraphs rated as Level III are fully successful.

The average quality of paragraphs varied greatly among age groups. For example, Texas students performed below their national peers at age 9, where the "typical" Texas student wrote proportionately fewer paragraphs scored at Levels II and III. Differences were more pronounced at ages 13 and 17. Two percent of the paragraphs written by Texas 13-year-olds were fully developed paragraphs (Level III), and three percent of those written by Texas 17-year-olds were fully developed, compared to 14 percent and 11 percent respectively of paragraphs written by students in the nation.

TABLE XVI

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
QUALITY OF PARAGRAPHS
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Paragraph Quality	Average Percentages*					
	Age 9		Age 13		Age 17	
	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Paragraphs in Form Only	73	57	54	22	43	24
Level II: Coherent Paragraphs	25	38	44	64	54	66
Level III: Fully Developed Paragraphs	2	4	2	14	3	11

*These figures represent the average percentages of paragraphs of each level written by students in each age group.

In general, use of a greater number of compound and complex sentences indicates increased writing maturity and greater sophistication in expressing ideas in written form. The last two sentence types shown in Table XVII, run-on sentences and fragments, are errors in sentence construction and are unacceptable. Across all age levels, the performance of Texas students in writing these types of sentences did not differ substantially from students in the nation.

TABLE XVII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF SENTENCES IN ESSAY
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Sentence Types	Average Percentages*					
	Age 9		Age 13		Age 17	
	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.
Acceptable Sentences						
Simple Sentences	43	42	42	46	52	48
Compound Sentences	5	5	8	7	6	6
Complex Sentences	22	27	22	24	27	31
Unacceptable Sentences						
Run-On Sentences	22	19	22	18	9	10
Sentence Fragments	7	6	6	5	6	5

*These figures represent the average percentages of sentences of each type written by students in each age group.

Errors in Writing

Table XVIII provides a comparison of U.S. and Texas 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds on six types of errors in writing. The table shows that 29 percent of the sentences written by a typical Texas 9-year-old were awkward in construction, whereas 19 percent of sentences written by students in the United States were awkward. Texas students wrote a higher percentage of awkward sentences than students in the nation. With respect to other types of errors, the performance of Texas students was similar to students in the nation.

TABLE XVIII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF ERRORS IN ESSAY
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Types of Errors	Averages*					
	Age 9		Age 13		Age 17	
	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.
Average Percentages						
Awkward Sentences	29	19	35	31	28	18
Word Choice Errors	1	1	1	1	1	1
Spelling Errors	10	8	5	5	3	3
Capitalization Errors	2	†	1	†	1	†
Agreement Errors	12	13	10	15	7	8
Average Number						
Punctuation Errors	1	†	2	†	2	†

*These figures represent the average percentage or number of each type of error made by the students in each age group.

†Data not available for the nation.

Other Indicators of Writing Skill

Appendix C, page 59, provides further information about length of words, sentences, and paragraphs which can be taken as a general index of fluency in writing. Texas students in all three age groups used fewer total words per essay and fewer sentences and paragraphs per essay than did their national counterparts. Nine and 13-year-old Texans wrote longer sentences, but all age levels of Texas students wrote shorter paragraphs than their national counterparts. Texas 17-year-olds used twice as many words per essay, words per paragraph, and sentences per paragraph as Texas 13-year-olds, a finding which parallels national figures and reflects growth in writing fluency.

PERFORMANCE OF SUB-POPULATIONS

Family Income Status

The performance of 9-year-old students from low income families was below that of students who were not from low income families. Smaller percentages of paragraphs written by students from low income families were judged to be coherent. These students used shorter words, wrote fewer complex sentences, and misspelled a higher percentage of words. Awkward sentences, agreement errors, and capitalization errors also occurred more frequently than in papers written by students who were not from low income families. Conversely, students not from low income families wrote more words per essay, more fully developed paragraphs, and more words per paragraph. Performance in other areas of writing mechanics was essentially equal for the two income levels. Thirteen-year-olds from low income families performed below 13-year-olds in the state on some mechanical elements and had a higher frequency of misspelled words and agreement errors (Appendix C, pages 54-57).

Ethnicity

Writers in the three ethnic groups demonstrated wide diversity in the mechanics of writing. "Other" students equalled or surpassed students statewide on almost all measures of writing mechanics. Black 9-year-olds wrote proportionately fewer words per essay and fewer coherent paragraphs. Black 13-year-olds misspelled a higher percentage of words and made a higher percentage of agreement errors than did "other" students. Seventeen-year-old black students, however, equalled students statewide on three of the 11 elements of essays, but were significantly below students statewide on words per essay, sentences per essay, paragraphs per essay, words per paragraph, and sentences per paragraph. Mexican American 9-year-olds made a higher percentage of agreement errors and used a higher percentage of run-on sentences than students statewide. Thirteen-year-old Mexican American students wrote a lower percentage of simple sentences than did "other" students, and wrote proportionately more run-on sentences. They used more words per sentence than did either black or "other" students. At age 17, Mexican American students equalled or exceeded statewide percentages on six of the seven elements (Appendix C, pages 58-61).

Males and Females

Analysis of writing mechanics for males and females revealed that at all age levels females wrote better paragraphs, constructed better sentences, and generally made fewer errors than males (Appendix C, pages 58-61).

Languages Spoken in the Home

The mechanics of writing were analyzed according to the use of language in the home: "English Only," "Mostly English," and "Mostly Other." Students who reported that only English is spoken in their homes generally performed better in writing mechanics than students statewide (Appendix C, pages 66-69).

RECOGNIZING APPROPRIATE WRITING AND VALUING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

RECOGNIZING APPROPRIATE WRITING

In addition to actual writing performance, students' ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate writing was measured. One exercise was administered to 13-year-olds, and three to 17-year-olds. Nine-year-old students were not tested, since this type of item was judged to be inappropriate for this age level.

Thirteen-year-old students responded to the following:

Pat Brown has been asked by his class to invite Mr. Jones to come and speak about safety.

Look at the three invitations below. Fill in the oval beside the invitation which is BEST.

● Dear Mr. Jones,

Our school would appreciate your speaking to us about safety at 9:30 a.m. next Tuesday, January 3, at Rayburn School. If you are free at this time, please accept our invitation.

Sincerely,

Pat Brown

○ Dear Mr. Jones,

I'm supposed to find out if you can speak to us at Rayburn next Tuesday, January 3 at 9:00? Please accept this.

Sincerely,

Pat Brown

Dear Mr. Jones,

Our school would like for you to speak to us about safety. Is that okay with you. We could have you on Tuesday of next week, and you could talk in our auditorium.

Yours Truly,

Pat Brown

○ I don't know.

Seventeen-year-olds responded to the following:

Below are three pieces of writing that all say essentially the same thing. However, one says it with better usage and greater clarity than the other two. Fill in the oval beside the piece of writing you think would be the MOST appropriate to use in a letter to the editor.

○ It is a crime what the town did last week regarding leaves, not letting us burn them while they are piling up all over our yards as well as our neighbors.

● The town has acted hastily and without thought in banning the burning of leaves. What are we going to do with our leaves now? The town should supply a collection service.

○ The town has made a most serious mistake in banning the burning of leaves. having made no provisions for the disposal of said leaves which are even now accumulating on the lawns of the residents of this fair town.

○ I don't know.

Below are three pieces of writing that all say essentially the same thing. However, one says it with more force and greater clarity than the other two. Fill in the oval beside the piece of writing you think would be the MOST appropriate to submit as a want ad.

○ We have the kittens, you have the home, let's get together. They are free to anyone calling 785-2345 after 6:00 p.m. They love children and children will love them.

● I must separate from five adorable kitties, mixed colors, weaned, sandbox trained, love children. Free to anyone promising a lovely home. Call 785-2345 after 6:00 p.m.

○ Free kittens not for sale, but free to good home. Just what your child needs. we have them for you at once. Any evening call 785-2345.

○ I don't know.

Below are three pieces of writing that all say essentially the same thing. However, one says it with better usage and greater clarity than the other two. Fill in the oval beside the piece of writing you think would be the MOST appropriate to use in a business letter.

○ Enclosed is my cancelled check (photocopied), it shows I paid the bill last December which you say I didn't and I hope this will satisfy you completely.

● On February 15 you wrote that my bill for the month of December was unpaid. I am enclosing a photocopy of my cancelled check as proof that I have paid it.

○ In answer to yours of the 15th of Feb., it behooves me to respectively submit a photocopy of my check cashed by you, to show that I have paid it.

○ I don't know.

Statewide Results

As shown in Table XIX, the performance of Texas 13-year-old students was below that of students in the nation. The performance of Texas 17-year-old students was also below national student performance on all of the three exercises, but performance differences were smaller than for 13-year-olds. Both nationally and statewide, 17-year-olds had most difficulty with the item requiring recognition of the most appropriate letter to the editor and least difficulty with recognition of the appropriate passage for a business letter.

TABLE XIX

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING
AGES 13 AND 17
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Exercises	Percentages Correct	
	Texas	U.S.
13-Year-Olds		
Invitation to Visiting Speaker	76	87
17-Year-Olds		
Letter to Editor	34	39
Want Ad for Newspaper	60	64
Passage for Business Letter	85	87

Regional Results

Among the 20 geographic regions of the state there were variations of as much as seven percentage points above and below the performance of students statewide (Table XX). Thirteen-year-olds in Regions VIII, IX, XII, XV, XVI, and XIX performed better than students statewide. Seventeen-year-olds in Regions IV, VI, and XIII equalled or exceeded the performance of students statewide on the three items they took.

TABLE XX

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE BY REGION

Texas Regions	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	76	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
Region I	74	29	56	81
Region II	73	26	60	84
Region III	76	34	52	83
Region IV	72	35	65	84
Region V	79	32	62	84
Region VI	76	40	54	84
Region VII	72	33	55	87
Region VIII	82	35	53	80
Region IX	81	36	55	83
Region X	75	38	62	85
Region XI	79	34	61	86
Region XII	81	31	61	85
Region XIII	77	34	61	89
Region XIV	74	35	63	82
Region XV	80	32	59	89
Region XVI	82	35	56	86
Region XVII	74	30	57	88
Region XVIII	76	29	54	85
Region XIX	80	29	64	85
Region XX	73	34	56	82

Family Income Status

Table XXI compares the performance of 13- and 17-year-old students from low income families with the performance of students not from low income families on four writing items. Students from low income families performed less well than students statewide on all four items. Differences in student performance were greater at age 13 than at age 17.

TABLE XXI

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
Family Income Levels	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	76	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
Low Income	67	28	53	80
Not Low Income	79	34	61	85

Ethnicity

The percentages of minority students who selected the most appropriate writing passages were below state percentages at both age levels. Differences were not as great at age 17. Mexican American 17-year-olds as a group had the lowest scores on two of the three items (Table XXII).

TABLE XXII

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
Ethnic Groups	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	76	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
Black	65	29	56	77
Mexican American	70	28	55	82
Other	80	35	61	87

Size and Type of School District

The data showed no consistent relationship among types and sizes of school districts and the results for these items (Appendix C, page 71).

Per Pupil Expenditure

Fifty-four percent of Texas students from districts spending less than $700 per pupil annually recognized appropriate writing for a newspaper want ad, as compared with 62 percent of students from districts spending $1,000 or more (Appendix C, page 71).

Males and Females

Females generally performed better than males in recognizing appropriate writing as shown in Table XXIII.

TABLE XXIII

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	76	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
Males	73	31	59	80
Females	78	36	60	89

Languages Spoken in the Home

For four exercises calling for recognition of good writing, Table XXIV shows the performance of 13- and 17-year-old students grouped according to home language. Students who reported that only English is spoken in their homes performed better than students statewide on all three writing items given to 17-year-olds and on the item given to 13-year-olds. Students reporting a language other than English spoken predominantly in the home performed below students statewide.

TABLE XXIV

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	78	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
English Only	80	35	61	87
Two Languages	76	32	61	84
Other Language Predominant	68	26	48	76

VALUING WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Recognizing the importance of writing and its varied purposes is a basic step toward effective communication. Five short-answer exercises were used to assess students' attitudes toward writing. Students reported how frequently they use writing, if they write for purpose and enjoyment, and ways writing is used to communicate or learn about the past.

Two exercises were administered to all three age groups:

How often do you write something down so you won't forget it?

- ○ Often
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Never

How often do you write stories for your own enjoyment?

- ○ Often
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Never

Thirteen-year-olds and 17-year-olds answered the following question:

During the last 12 months, did you write letters to friends?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

(If Yes) About how many times? _____

Nine and 17 year-olds responded to this item:

List some ways that people can give information to others.

_____

_____

_____

Seventeen year-olds responded to the following item:

How do we know what happened a long time ago?

_____

_____

_____

Tables XXV-XXIX compare the reported use of writing by Texas students with their peers in the nation. Table XXV indicates that the practice of writing to remember seems to be pervasive and consistent across age groups in Texas and the nation.

TABLE XXV

USE OF WRITING AS A MEMORY AID – AGES 9, 13, 17 STUDENTS RESPONDING EITHER "OFTEN" OR "SOMETIMES" COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Texas	87	89	89
United States	87	92	92

In both statewide and national samples, more nine-year-olds wrote stories for personal satisfaction than did 13- and 17-year-olds. However, a smaller percentage of Texas students at all three age levels wrote stories for personal satisfaction than did their peers nationally (Table XXVI).

TABLE XXVI

WRITING STORIES FOR PERSONAL SATISFACTION – AGES 9, 13, 17 STUDENTS RESPONDING EITHER "OFTEN" OR "SOMETIMES" COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Texas	71	40	34
United States	85	64	46

Texas 13-year-olds reported writing more letters to friends than did their peers in the United States (Table XXVII).

TABLE XXVII
WRITING LETTERS TO FRIENDS – AGES 13 AND 17
STUDENTS WRITING TEN OR MORE LETTERS DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages	
	Age 13	Age 17
Texas	53	46
United States	29	42

The percentages of Texas 9- and 17-year-olds who listed writing as a way to communicate were about the same as percentages of students nationally (Table XXVIII). However, a greater percentage of Texas 17-year-olds mentioned some method involving writing as a means of learning about the past than did their national peers (Table XXIX).

TABLE XXVIII

WRITING AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION – AGES 9 AND 17
STUDENTS WHO LISTED AT LEAST ONE WAY INVOLVING WRITING
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages	
	Age 9	Age 17
Texas	44	88
United States	43	87

TABLE XXIX

WRITING AS A MEANS OF LEARNING ABOUT THE PAST – AGE 17
STUDENTS WHO LISTED AT LEAST ONE WAY INVOLVING WRITING
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

	Percentages
	Age 17
Texas	85
United States	78

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. About half the 9-year-old Texans in grades 3 and 4 (49 percent) demonstrated ability to do imaginative, expressive writing. This performance approached that of their counterparts in the United States (55 percent).

2. Texas students did not perform well in comparison with their national counterparts on exercises calling for persuasive or explanatory writing. Only about two-thirds as many Texas 9-year-olds (10 percent) as students in the United States (14 percent) were able to write an effective letter requesting a kite. About half as high a percentage of Texas 13-year-olds (17 percent) wrote an effective letter describing a school problem and proposing a solution to the principal as did their peers in the nation (31 percent). Less than half the percentage of Texas 17-year-olds (8 percent) were able to write a fully satisfactory letter making application for a job as their counterparts in the United States (18 percent). It is evident, however, that both Texas students and students across the country had difficulty in successfully doing explanatory and persuasive writing.

3. In the area of writing mechanics, Texas students of all three age levels performed similarly to their national counterparts in the construction of various types of sentences and in the number of errors made by writing run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Almost one-fourth of the sentences written by 9- and 13-year-old Texans were run-on sentences; only about one-tenth of the sentences written by Texas 17-year-olds were run-on sentences. Texas students made few errors in writing sentence fragments. However, more than one-fourth of the sentences written by Texans of all three ages were judged to be awkward, a higher proportion than found among their peers in the nation.

   Texas students made about the same percentages of spelling errors as their counterparts in the nation, with percentages of words misspelled decreasing from 10 percent among 9-year-olds to 3 percent among 17-year-olds. Errors in grammatical agreement (subject/verb, noun/pronoun, noun/modifer, singular/plural, and tense) made by 9- and 17-year-old students in Texas were similar in frequency to those made by students of similar ages in the nation, and Texas 13-year-olds made only two-thirds as many agreement errors as their national peers. Such errors in agreement were made only about half as frequently by Texas 17-year-olds (7 percent of sentences) as by 9-year-olds (12 percent of sentences). Texas pupils averaged only about two punctuation errors per essay, and errors in word choice and capitalization were made very infrequently by both Texas students and by students in the United States.

   Higher percentages of students in all three age groups in the United States wrote acceptable paragraphs than in Texas. Almost three-fourths of the paragraphs written by Texas 9-year-olds were inadequate, as compared with just over half the paragraphs written by their counterparts in the United States. At age 13 more than

half the paragraphs written by Texas students were unsatisfactory while the proportion was less than one-fourth nationally. However, performance of 17-year-olds was better on this dimension, even though it did not approach the level of performance of 17-year-olds in the nation. While the national percentage of satisfactory paragraphs was about the same from age 13 to age 17, the Texas performance for 17-year-olds was over 10 percentage points better than for 13-year-olds. More than half of the paragraphs written by Texas 17-year-olds were satisfactory, as compared with three-fourths of the paragraphs written by their national peers.

Use of longer words, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as use of more compound and complex sentences, is regarded as a general measure of fluency in writing. Texas students at all three age levels wrote words and sentences of about the same length as students in the nation. However, Texas students wrote fewer sentences per paragraph, resulting in shorter paragraphs and essays.

4. Texas 13-year-olds were less able to recognize quality writing by others than were 13-year-olds in the nation. However, Texas 17-year-olds performed about as well as their national counterparts in recognizing effective writing.

5. About nine-tenths of Texas students of all three ages reported that they write ideas down as an aid to remembering. More than twice as high a percentage of Texas 9-year-olds (71 percent) said they write stories for enjoyment than did 17-year-olds (34 percent). Approximately half of Texas 13- and 17-year-olds indicated that they have written at least ten letters to friends during the past year. Twice as high a percentage of Texas 17-year-olds (88 percent) as 9-year-olds (44 percent) demonstrated that they view writing as a means of communication. Eighty-five percent of Texas 17-year-olds saw writing as a tool for learning about the past, a significantly larger percentage than found among students in the nation (78 percent).

6. Performance of students on some of the writing competencies measured was analyzed for the 20 geographic regions of Texas. In most of the regions there was no consistent pattern of students performing higher or lower than students statewide. Some differences, however, were observed:

   - Students in Region I, with a relatively high proportion of minority students, performed less well than students statewide on three of the four specific writing tasks (those given to 9- and 13-year-olds).

   - Students in Region XVI, which has a smaller proportion of minority students than the state as a whole, performed better than students statewide on two of the four writing tasks (those given to 9-year-olds).

7. Writing results were studied for several other sub-populations and differences were found as follows:

- For most writing competencies measured, students who were from average or higher income families performed better than students from low income families.

- "Other" students performed consistently better than black and Mexican American students on specific writing tasks measured and on recognizing effective writing. Seventeen-year-old Mexican American students performed better than black students in writing effective letters and on several aspects of writing mechanics.

- On exercises calling for expressive, persuasive, and explanatory writing, 9- and 13-year-old students in urban school districts and in districts with over 50,000 students, performed less well than students in most other types and sizes of districts. No other consistent differences were found in the performance of students in the various types and sizes of districts studied.

- Females performed consistently better than males on almost all the writing tasks and skills measured.

- No consistent patterns were found in the relationship between student achievement in writing and annual expenditure of state and local funds per pupil. More information would be necessary to reach definitive conclusions.

- Students from homes where only English is spoken performed better than students from homes where a language other than English is spoken predominantly.

CONCLUSION

Performance of Texas students on many aspects of writing mechanics was generally comparable to that of their counterparts in the United States. Writing achievement of students in the nation has been found to be low in studies carried out in recent years by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Achievement of Texas students on specific writing tasks and certain aspects of writing mechanics was found to be generally low on the writing tasks and skills measured in this study.

If the ability to write effectively in the English language is to continue to be valued as an essential competency for all citizens in our society, concentrated attention must be given to finding the causes which underlie inadequate development of writing skills, both within school programs and in the students' homes and communities.

The fact that some students demonstrated high degrees of competence in writing is hopeful. The challenge before educators, policy-makers, parents, and students is to provide positive incentives for good writing as well as better ways for all Texas students to develop effective writing skills.

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS WRITING OBJECTIVES, 1973-1974 ASSESSMENT

Objectives and Sub-Objectives	Age Groups to Which Related Exercises Are Applicable		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
I. Demonstrates ability in writing to reveal personal feelings and ideas.			
A. Through free expression	X		
B. Through the use of conventional modes of discourse			
II. Demonstrates ability to write in response to a wide range of societal demands and obligations. Ability is defined to include correctness of usage, punctuations, spelling, and form or convention as appropriate to particular writing tasks, e.g., manuscripts, letters.			
A. Social		X	
1. Personal			
2. Organizational			
3. Community			
B. Business/Vocational	X		X
C. Scholastic		X	X
III. Indicates the importance attached to writing skills.			
A. Recognizes the necessity of writing for a variety of needs (as in I and II)	X	X	X
B. Writes to fulfill those needs	X	X	X
C. Gets satisfaction, even enjoyment, from having written something well			X

APPENDIX B
DEFINITIONS OF
TAP REPORTING GROUPS

GROUP LABEL	CATEGORY TITLE – NUMBER OF GROUPS Group Definition – *SOURCE* of Data
	ESC REGIONS – 20
REGION I ⋮ REGION XX	Geographic regions served by education service centers. *SOURCE:* Texas Education Agency (TEA) Management Information Center (MIC) data files.
	DISTRICT TYPE – 5
URBAN	The central cities of the state's seven largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census.
OTHER CENTRAL CITY	The central cities in the state's remaining Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census.
SUBURBAN	An outlying district adjacent to a Central City.
NON-METROPOLITAN	A district not defined as one of the other four types.
RURAL	A district of less than 1,000 ADA having no central town.
	SOURCE: TEA MIC data files.
	DISTRICT SIZE – 5
50,000 & Over 10,000 to 50,000 3,000 to 10,000 500 to 3,000 Under 500	Range of pupils in average daily attendance (ADA), e.g., "ADA/50K+" means "greater than 49,999 ADA." *SOURCE:* TEA MIC data files.

GROUP LABEL	CATEGORY TITLE – NUMBER OF GROUPS Group Definition – *SOURCE* of Data
	PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE – 5
Under $700 $700 to $799 $800 to $899 $900 to $999 $1,000 & Over	Amount of money the district budgeted per pupil in 1976-77. (Exclusive of Capital Outlay or Federal Funds.) *SOURCE:* TEA MIC data files.
	ETHNICITY – 3
BLACK MEXICAN AMERICAN OTHER	Ethnic designation filled in by school personnel for each pupil. *SOURCE:* Pupil Information form (PI).
	SEX – 2
MALE FEMALE	Sex designation filled in by the school personnel for each pupil. *SOURCE:* PI
	FREE LUNCH ELIGIBLE – 2
FREE LUNCH-YES FREE LUNCH-NO	YES if the school district identified the pupil as "eligible for free or reduced price meals" based on family income and number of children in the family. Otherwise NO. *SOURCE:* PI
	HOME LANGUAGE – 3
LANGUAGE USED-ENGLISH	The pupil indicated that only English is used in the home.
LANGUAGE USED-TWO LANGUAGES	English is the most often spoken in the home, but another language is also spoken.
LANGUAGE USED-NON-ENG.	English is not the language most often spoken in the home.
	SOURCE: Tailsheet (TS), an information sheet filled out by each pupil after completing one of the tests.

APPENDIX C

TABLE XXX
EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9
PERFORMANCE BY CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Percentages	
	Well Elaborated Expressive Writing	Successful Business Letter
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
Type of Community		
Urban	40	8
Other Central City	46	8
Suburban	56	12
Non-Metropolitan	48	11
Rural	46	11
Average Daily Attendance		
50,000 or more	40	8
10,000-49,999	54	9
3,000-9,999	47	12
500-2,999	52	12
Less than 500	43	10
Annual Expenditure Per Pupil		
Less than $700	42	7
$700-799	51	8
$800-899	50	10
$900-999	47	12
$1,000 or more	51	13

TABLE XXXI

EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

	Percentages	
	Well Elaborated Expressive Writing	Successful Business Letter
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
Males	44	8
Females	54	13

TABLE XXXII

EXPRESSIVE AND EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 9
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

	Percentages	
	Well Elaborated Expressive Writing	Successful Business Letter
Texas	49	10
United States	55	14
English Only	59	14
Two Languages	51	11
Other Language Predominant	35	4

TABLE XXXIII

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE BY CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Percentages			
Categories of School Districts	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	40	41	14	3
United States	26	40	27	4
Type of Community				
Urban	49	36	10	2
Other Central City	40	42	13	3
Suburban	35	43	16	4
Non-Metropolitan	39	43	14	3
Rural	38	41	15	4
Average Daily Attendance				
50,000 or more	49	37	10	2
10,000-49,999	39	41	15	4
3,000-9,999	37	44	15	3
500-2,999	37	44	15	3
Less than 500	36	42	16	3
Annual Expenditure Per Pupil				
Less than $700	39	41	16	3
$700-799	40	40	14	3
$800-899	39	41	14	3
$900-999	42	39	13	5
$1,000 or more	40	44	13	2

TABLE XXXIV

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

	Percentages			
	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	40	41	14	3
United States	26	40	27	4
Males	44	40	11	2
Females	36	42	16	4

TABLE XXXV

PERSUASIVE WRITING – AGE 13
LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL
FOUR LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

	Percentages			
	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Texas	40	41	14	3
United States	26	40	27	4
English Only	35	44	16	4
Two Languages	38	42	15	4
Other Language Predominant	53	35	8	0

†Less than ½ percent.

TABLE XXXVI

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE BY CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18
Type of Community				
Urban	68	20	46	8
Other Central City	65	21	43	7
Suburban	68	23	45	9
Non-Metropolitan	68	21	43	8
Rural	69	22	39	7
Average Daily Attendance				
50,000 or more	67	21	47	8
10,000-49,999	66	21	44	8
3,000-9,999	67	24	41	8
500-2,999	71	21	45	8
Less than 500	71	25	41	9
Annual Expenditure Per Pupil				
Less than $700	72	19	46	7
$700-799	68	22	44	8
$800-899	66	20	42	7
$900-999	64	22	44	8
$1,000 or more	71	25	47	10

TABLE XXXVII

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United	74	32	68	18
Males	60	19	43	6
Females	75	24	45	9

TABLE XXXVIII

EXPLANATORY WRITING – AGE 17
JOB APPLICATION LETTER
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDED
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

	Percentages			
	Provided Educational Information	Described Job Applied For	Provided Information on How to Contact	Provided All Three Essential Elements
Texas	68	22	44	8
United States	74	32	68	18
English Only	69	23	45	9
Two Languages	69	20	45	7
Other Language Predominant	56	19	36	5

TABLE XXXIX

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13*
QUALITY OF PARAGRAPHS
PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

Paragraph Quality	Average Percentages							
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds			
	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Paragraphs in Form Only	83	65	73	57	62	50	54	22
Level II: Coherent Paragraphs	16	32	25	38	37	47	44	64
Level III: Fully Developed Paragraphs	1	3	2	4	†	3	2	14

*Not analyzed by family income at age 17.
†Less than ½ percent.

TABLE XL

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
TYPES OF SENTENCES IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

Sentence Types	Average Percentages							
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds			
	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.
Acceptable Sentences								
Simple Sentences	45	42	43	42	37	45	42	46
Compound Sentences	7	5	5	5	8	8	8	7
Complex Sentences	18	25	22	27	18	24	22	24
Unacceptable Sentences								
Run-On Sentences	23	22	22	19	31	17	22	18
Fragment Sentences	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	5

TABLE XLI

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
TYPES OF ERRORS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

Types of Errors	Average Percentages							
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds			
	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.
Average Percentages								
Awkward Sentences	34	26	29	19	44	31	35	31
Word Choice Errors	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Spelling Errors	12	9	10	8	8	4	5	5
Capitalization Errors	3	1	2	†	2	1	1	†
Agreement Errors	16	10	12	14	7	10	15	
Average Number								
Punctuation Errors	1	1	1	†	3	2	2	†

†Not summarized nationally.

TABLE XLII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
AVERAGE LENGTH OF WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS IN ESSAY PERFORMANCE BY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL

Elements Analyzed	Average Percentages							
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds			
	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.	Low Income	High Income	Texas	U.S.
Words in Essay	39	47	44	55	75	82	79	128
Sentences in Essay	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	9
Paragraphs in Essay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Letters in Words	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Words in Sentences	16	17	17	15	21	16	18	17
Words in Paragraphs	38	45	42	50	73	67	69	100
Sentences in Paragraphs	3	3	3	4	5	5	5	7

TABLE XLIII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
QUALITY OF PARAGRAPHS
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

Paragraph Quality	Average Percentages														
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds					17-Year-Olds				
	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Paragraphs in Form Only	89	77	66	73	57	58	60	51	54	22	77	46	36	43	24
Level II: Coherent Paragraphs	11	22	31	25	38	40	40	46	44	64	23	53	60	54	66
Level III: Fully Developed Paragraphs	0	1	3	2	4	2	1	3	2	14	0	0	4	3	11

TABLE XLIV

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF SENTENCES IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

Sentence Types	Average Percentages														
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds					17-Year-Olds				
	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.
Acceptable Sentences															
Simple Sentences	48	39	43	43	42	43	35	45	42	46	44	49	54	52	48
Compound Sentences	3	9	4	5	5	9	7	8	8	7	5	6	6	6	6
Complex Sentences	18	18	26	22	27	21	19	24	22	24	25	31	27	27	31
Unacceptable Sentences															
Run-on Sentences	21	27	21	22	19	18	32	18	22	18	17	9	8	9	10
Fragment Sentences	10	7	6	7	6	8	6	6	6	5	9	6	5	6	5

TABLE XLV

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF ERRORS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

Types of Errors	Averages														
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds					17-Year-Olds				
	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.
Average Percentages															
Awkward Sentences	30	37	25	29	19	39	42	32	35	31	35	32	26	28	18
Word Choice Errors	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Spelling Errors	11	11	10	10	8	7	5	4	5	5	4	3	3	3	3
Capitalization Errors	5	2	1	2	†	1	2	1	1	†	2	1	1	1	†
Agreement Errors	17	18	8	12	14	20	10	8	10	15	14	8	6	7	8
Average Numbers															
Punctuation Errors	1	1	1	1	†	2	2	2	2	†	1	2	2	2	†

TABLE XLVI

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
AVERAGE LENGTH OF WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY ETHNIC GROUP

Elements Analyzed	Average Numbers														
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds					17-Year-Olds				
	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.	Black	Mex. Amer.	Oth.	Texas	U.S.
Words per essay	33	48	46	44	55	56	78	85	79	128	49	116	108	100	137
Sentences per essay	3	3	4	4	5	4	5	6	6	9	4	8	8	7	9
Paragraphs per essay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2
Letters per word	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Words per sentence	14	21	16	17	15	15	22	16	18	17	15	15	15	15	16
Words per paragraph	31	46	44	42	50	58	72	70	69	100	57	81	87	82	97
Sentences per paragraph	3	3	4	3	4	4	5	5	5	7	4	6	6	6	7

TABLE XLVII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
QUALITY OF PARAGRAPHS
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

Paragraph Quality	Average Percentages											
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds				17-Year-Olds			
	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Paragraphs in Form Only	78	66	73	57	60	48	54	22	49	38	43	24
Level II: Coherent Paragraphs	20	32	25	38	37	50	44	64	50	58	54	66
Level III: Fully Developed Paragraphs	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	14	1	4	3	11

TABLE XLVIII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF SENTENCES IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

Sentence Types	Average Percentages											
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds				17-Year-Olds			
	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.
Acceptable Sentences												
Simple Sentences	44	42	43	42	40	44	42	46	51	53	52	48
Compound Sentences	4	7	5	5	7	8	8	7	6	6	6	6
Complex Sentences	22	23	22	27	21	23	22	24	25	29	27	31
Run-on Sentences	23	22	22	19	25	20	22	18	12	7	9	10
Fragment Sentences	7	6	7	6	8	4	6	5	7	5	6	5

TABLE XLIX

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
TYPES OF ERRORS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALES

Types of Errors	Averages											
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds				17-Year-Olds			
	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.
Average Percentages												
Awkward Sentences	30	28	29	19	36	34	35	31	29	27	28	18
Word Choice Errors	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Spelling Errors	12	8	10	8	6	4	5	5	4	2	3	3
Capitalization Errors	3	1	2	†	2	1	1	†	1	1	1	†
Agreement Errors	12	13	12	14	10	10	10	15	9	6	7	8
Average Numbers												
Punctuation Errors	1	1	1	†	2	2	2	†	2	2	2	†

†Not summarized nationally.

TABLE L

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
AVERAGE LENGTH OF WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE OF MALES AND FEMALE

Elements Analyzed	Average Numbers											
	9-Year-Olds				13-Year-Olds				17-Year-Olds			
	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.	Male	Female	Texas	U.S.
Words per essay	37	52	44	55	70	88	79	128	90	109	100	137
Sentences per essay	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	9	6	8	7	9
Paragraphs per essay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
Letters per word	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Words per sentence	17	17	17	15	19	17	18	17	16	14	15	16
Words per paragraph	36	49	42	50	63	75	69	100	80	84	82	97
Sentences per paragraph	3	4	3	4	4	5	5	7	5	6	6	7

TABLE LI

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
QUALITY OF PARAGRAPHS
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

Paragraph Quality	Average Percentages									
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds				
	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.
Level I: Paragraphs in Form Only	70	72	75	73	57	52	51	66	54	22
Level II: Coherent Paragraphs	28	25	24	25	38	47	47	28	44	64
Level III: Fully Developed Paragraphs	2	3	1	2	4	1	2	6	2	14

TABLE LII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
TYPES OF SENTENCES IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

Sentence Types	Average Percentages									
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds				
	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.
Acceptable Sentences										
Simple Sentences	44	42	38	43	42	47	36	36	42	46
Compound Sentences	6	5	8	5	5	9	8	2	8	7
Complex Sentences	25	24	14	22	27	24	20	21	22	24
Unacceptable Sentences										
Run-on Sentences	18	21	35	22	19	15	25	35	22	18
Fragment Sentences	7	8	4	7	6	5	8	5	6	5

TABLE LIII

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 and 13
TYPES OF ERRORS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

Types of Errors	Averages									
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds				
	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.
Average Percentages										
Awkward Sentences	24	29	37	29	19	31	37	45	35	31
Word Choice Errors	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Spelling Errors	9	10	8	10	8	4	5	6	5	5
Capitalization Errors	2	2	3	2	†	1	1	1	1	†
Agreement Errors	9	12	22	12	14	8	11	14	10	15
Average Numbers										
Punctuation Errors	1	1	1	1	†	2	3	2	2	†

†Not summarized nationally.

TABLE LIV

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9 AND 13
AVERAGE LENGTH OF WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS IN ESSAY
PERFORMANCE BY HOME LANGUAGE

Elements Analyzed	Average Numbers									
	9-Year-Olds					13-Year-Olds				
	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.	English Only	Two Lang.	Other Lang.	Texas	U.S.
Words per essay	46	46	49	44	55	79	83	83	79	128
Sentences per essay	4	4	3	4	5	6	6	5	6	9
Paragraphs per essay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Letters per word	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Words per sentence	15	18	23	17	15	15	17	26	18	17
Words per paragraph	43	44	44	42	50	62	74	80	69	100
Sentences per paragraph	4	3	3	3	4	5	5	5	5	7

TABLE LV

WRITING MECHANICS – AGES 9, 13, 17
AVERAGE LENGTH OF WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS IN ESSAY
COMPARISON OF TEXAS WITH THE NATION

Elements Analyzed	Average Numbers					
	Age 9		Age 13		Age 17	
	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.
Words per Essay	44	55	79	128	100	137
Sentences per Essay	4	5	6	9	7	9
Paragraphs per Essay	1	1	1	2	1	2
Letters per Word	4	4	4	4	4	4
Words per Sentence	17	15	18	17	16	16
Words per Paragraph	42	50	69	100	82	97
Sentences per Paragraph	3	4	5	7	6	7

TABLE LVI

RECOGNITION OF APPROPRIATE WRITING – AGES 13 AND 17 PERFORMANCE BY CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Percentages Correct			
	Age 13	Age 17		
	Invitation to Visiting Speaker	Letter to Editor	Want Ad for Newspaper	Passage for Business Letter
Texas	76	34	60	85
United States	87	39	64	87
Type of Community				
Urban	69	34	62	85
Other Cen. City	77	33	59	83
Suburban	79	36	63	86
Non-Metropolitan	77	32	56	84
Rural	73	29	55	87
Average Daily Attendance				
50,000 or more	69	35	62	84
10,000-49,999	78	34	62	84
3,000-9,999	78	33	56	84
500-2,999	77	34	58	86
Less than 500	76	28	57	85
Annual Expenditure Per Pupil				
Less than $700	76	33	55	82
$700-799	79	34	61	87
$800-899	75	35	61	85
$900-999	75	34	56	86
$1,000 or more	75	31	62	84